

## The Holy Spirit and you . . .

Share together your own understanding and experience of the Holy Spirit.

- Who is He?
- What do you know about Pentecost?
- What does the Holy Spirit mean for you?

## The promise of the Holy Spirit

In Old Testament days the Holy Spirit rested on great national leaders (like Moses); great prophets (like Elijah); great kings (like David) and on other special individuals. God gave his Spirit to such people to equip them for a special task to which He had called them.

When Jesus began his public ministry the Holy Spirit also descended upon Him. When that happened God's voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be given to all believers. After Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit soon descended with great power upon Jesus' disciples. The prophets in the Old Testament had already prophesied this event. The day on which this happened is called Pentecost.

- Read about the story of Pentecost together from Acts 2:1-13.

The Pentecost marks the beginning of a new time period in which the Spirit of God is active among all the members of God's people in a new way.

The promise of the Holy Spirit that was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost is given to every Christian today.

## What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives?

There are various areas where the Holy Spirit is active.

### HE DWELLS WITHIN US

There is a golden thread running through the Bible that God wants to dwell with his people. In the time period beginning with Pentecost, this happened in a more direct way than it ever had happened before. The place where God dwells among his people is the temple. Today, however, God's temple is no longer a building of stone, but a person (a believer) or a group of believers (the congregation).

- Read Romans 8:5-13 and discuss together the following question: In these verses life and death are compared and contrasted (verses 6, 10, 11, 13). Which roll does the Holy Spirit play in this life and death struggle?

## HE GIVES US SECURITY ABOUT OUR NEW STATUS: ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD

When you become a Christian you not only are acquitted, you also receive a new status. You are adopted by God and become a member of his family.

- Read Romans 8:14-17 and discuss the following questions:
  - (1) In verse 15 again two things are contrasted. Which contrast is now being made? Try to imagine yourself being in both positions. What are the most important differences?
  - (2) Why would an Aramaic word be used here (Abba, 'Father')? Have a look at Mark 14:36.
  - (3) What other consequences are there to being adopted as God's child (verse 17)?

## HE MAKES US MORE LIKE JESUS

When you become a Christian you don't become perfect. There's still a lot of evil and sin in your actions and character.

The Holy Spirit works within us, transforming us so that we can reflect more and more the character of Jesus.

He brings out in our lives the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Look up the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 and write them down here:

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## HE GIVES US GIFTS AND POWER

Jesus commands us to proclaim the Gospel. But we can't do that on our own. The Holy Spirit empowers us for the work.

Some members in the church have an official roll (elders and deacons). They give leadership and are to be an example to the rest of the congregation. At the same time, however, all members are active in various forms of service (hospitality, teaching, administration, mission, etc.). A church grows to maturity in faith and love when each member of the congregation does the work for which the Holy Spirit has empowered him or her.

The Holy Spirit enables everyone in the congregation to serve. That's why He gives gifts. These gifts have at least the following characteristics:

- the gifts of the Spirit focus the attention on Christ
- the gifts are always meant to serve each other and not to show off
- the gifts come in various types (for instance, gifts of speaking and gifts of helping), but one gift is not higher than the other.
- every Christian has received gifts in order to serve.

You can find a whole list of gifts in Romans 12:6-8. Read this passage together in your small groups and write down the gifts. Put a \* beside the gifts you do not understand.

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## Discuss

Think again about the question we began with and about all that has been said tonight.

- What does the Holy Spirit mean to you?
- Can you identify the fruit of the Spirit in your own life?
- Have you experienced any of the spiritual gifts?
- What questions do you still have?

## Some questions and answers

### IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK IN EVERY CHRISTIAN?

Yes, He is. Paul writes that no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). Even before you became a Christian, God was at work in your life in many ways—and He continues to work by his Spirit since then. The Holy Spirit is also at work in your life if you are not yet a Christian. He knows you and approaches you in order to make you curious and to give you the desire to belong to Jesus.

### IS THERE SOMETHING CALLED A BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Yes, there is. Paul says that all Christians are baptized with the Spirit and so become members of the body of Christ, the Christian church (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### WHEN SHOULD I EXPECT THIS TO HAPPEN?

This is something that happens at the beginning of each Christian’s life.

### IS THIS A ONCE AND FOR ALL EVENT?

Yes, the baptism with the Holy Spirit happens only once at the beginning of your life as a Christian. However, there is also something that is known as being filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul tells the Ephesian Christians to go on being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The disciples are filled with

the Spirit over and over again in Acts. The process of being renewed by the Holy Spirit goes on until we are with the Lord.

#### HOW DO WE RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

We simply ask (Luke 11:9-13).

#### HOW DO I KNOW I HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT?

If we are one of those people in whom the Spirit has been moving gradually in our lives over the years we may not always be conscious of the fact that we have received the Holy Spirit. In that case we do not notice major differences. Paul tells us that the work of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the fruit of the Holy Spirit that is produced (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the best test. If your life in Christ is bearing fruit then you have received the Holy Spirit.

### For reflection

Spend time this week thanking God for the gift of the Spirit. You may want to make the prayer your own: *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.*

Look back this week through the Bible passages we have covered. Make a note of any questions you still have about what Christians believe.